

Title: My Story

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'Twas on a chill
night, when the moon
shone pasty-faced
above the horizon,
balanced on the
towers of Lord
British's castle, that
the events I am about
to relate took place,
some years ago now. I
witnessed them all
from my tiny
mousehole.

Milords British and
Blackthorn are
accustomed to a game
of chess 'pon an
evening, over which
they argue the issues
that affect the course
of the realm. Lord
Blackthorn was on his
way to Lord British's
chambers, and Lord
British stood by a
window casement,
just having finished
setting the pieces
upon the board.

Suddenly the
shutters blew open,
and Lord British fell
to the ground, one
hand shielding his
eyes. A chill wind
entered the room, and
it seemed a gash was
torn in the very air.
Through the gash I
could see stars and
swirling clouds of
stellar dust, and a
coldness sucked all
the warmth from the
air. A terrible wind
tossed books and
blankets across the
room, and furniture

toppled.

From within this gash issued a great voice, unlike any I have ever heard. And these are the words it spoke (for I memorized them most carefully):

"Greetings, Lord British. I am the Time Lord, a being from beyond your dimension, as thou art from a world other than Sosaria. I am here to bring thee warning. Dost thou recall how long ago a mysterious Stranger came to Sosaria and saved the world from the evil wizard Mondain? He shattered the Gem of Immortality, within which dwelled a perfect likeness of this world."

Lord British slowly stood and faced the hole in the air. "I remember," he said. "Oft have I wished that stranger would return."

"He hath returned," spoke the voice. "But not to here. When the Gem was shattered, a thousand shards were scattered across the dimensions, and in each shard there is a perfect likeness of this world. And thou dost live upon one such shard, for thou art not of the true world-thou art merely a reflection."

Lord British looked shaken by this, and I did not know what to think! Was I merely a shadow of the real me, which lives still somewhere else

across uncounted universes?

"My task is to heal this shattered world, Lord British," said the voice. "And I seek to enlist thee in my cause. Be warned that in this case, healing carries with it a terrible price."

Concern warred with curiosity on my liege's face, but ever one to shoulder a burden, he straightened and faced the gash in the air bravely. "Name thy price."

"A shard of a universe is a powerful thing, and a universe shattered is always in danger from the powers of darkness. Already three shards were turned to evil, and sent to plague the original universe in the form of Shadowlords. Many times have I brought the Stranger back to Britannia, to preserve it from its own folly or from outside dangers. Yet as long as the world remaineth in pieces, it remaineth vulnerable. We must bring the shards into harmony, so that they resonate in such a manner that matches the original universe. Then the two universes shall merge, and be again as one."

"But if we are only shadows..." Lord British said wonderingly.

The light from the stars within the hole

seemed to dim.

"Indeed, the reflections shall become one with the original. Thou wouldst cease to be as thou art, and become part of the larger you. Thou shalt not die; however, uncounted generations have passed and borne children since that day, and they have no counterparts. They would perish utterly."

Lord British sagged in shock, realizing the terrible price that would be paid to heal the universe. "All of my people," he breathed.

"'Tis for the greater good."

Lord British bowed his head.

'Twas then I saw the movement by the door, half-hid by the heavy red curtains.

Lord Blackthorn stood there, concealed from the rest of the room, his face white. How long had he been listening? I cannot say, yet I suspect that he had heard all that the mysterious voice had to say.

"How then, shall I aid thee?" Lord British said, weariness in his voice.

"Aid the nobility that resideth in the human heart. Protect the Virtues that so recently came to thee in thought late at night. They are the Virtues of life, as your counterpart understands them to be. For when thy populace doth live and

breathe these Virtues,
shall it match the
true Britannia, and
thy shard shall
rejoin with it."

The gash in the air
began to close, and
with it warmth stole
back into the room.

"I was going to
discuss my idea with
Blackthorn tonight,"
Lord British
breathed. "Have I no
thoughts that are my
own? Is my life but
a reflection of
another me?"

"Nay," said the
voice, smaller through
the diminished
opening. "Say, rather,
that you are parallel,
for there is no
guarantee that thou
shalt accomplish what
I have set thee to. I
speak tonight to a
thousand of thee, and
ask the same of all.
Perhaps not all shall
seek to aid me." And
with that, the gash
closed, and the voice
was gone, leaving a
room that appeare
tossed by a mighty
storm.

"Destroy the world
to save the universe,"
Lord British said
bitterly. "I do not
wonder that some
may balk."

Lord Blackthorn
collected himself, and
strode into the room,
a decent mimicry of
surprise on his face.
"My liege! What has
happened here?" he
exclaimed, feigning
dismay well. But not
well enough to fool
his old friend, whose
eyes narrowed at
seeing him there.

"How much didst

thou hear?" demanded Lord British.

"Why, nothing," managed Blackthorn, his head ducked away from his friend, as he bent to retrieve the fallen chess pieces. "I merely came for our game of chess."

Together they righted the pedestal table, and set the pieces upon the black and white squares.

"Such simplicity to the game, Blackthorn," mused Lord British, idly brushing one finger against the board. "Black and white, each to its own color, as if life were so simple. What think you?"

Blackthorn sat heavily on a hassock beside the chess table. "I think that matters are never so simple, my liege. And that I would regret it deeply if someone, such as a friend, saw it thus."

Lord British's eyes met his. "Yet sometimes one must sacrifice a pawn to save a king."

Lord Blackthorn met his gaze squarely. "Even pawns have lives and loves at home, my lord." Then he reached out for a pawn, and firmly moved it forward two squares. "Shall we play a game?" he asked.

The chess game that night was a draw, and they played grimly.

And the next day, Lord British gathered the nobles to proclaim the idea of a new

system of Virtues,
and declared that
shrines should be
built across the land.

Lord Blackthorn
opposed it bitterly,
and many thought
him strange for doing
so, for ever had he
been a noble and
upright man, and
ever had he and Lord
British been in
accord. Declaring that
he should start his
own shrine, he
departed the castle
that day to live in a
tower in a lake on the
north side of the
city.

They are still the
best of friends, yet a
sadness hangs
between them, as if
they were forced into
making choices that
appealed not to them.
And at night, when I
creep softly from one
corner of my liege's
bedchamber to
another, I sometimes
see him take a pawn
from his night table,
and hold it in his
hand, and quietly
weep.

But I am but a
mouse, and none hear
me. This tale goes
unknown, save for
my writing these
enormous letters with
mine ink-stained tiny
paws for thee to
read, for I fear
indeed for our world
and for our people in
these perilous times.